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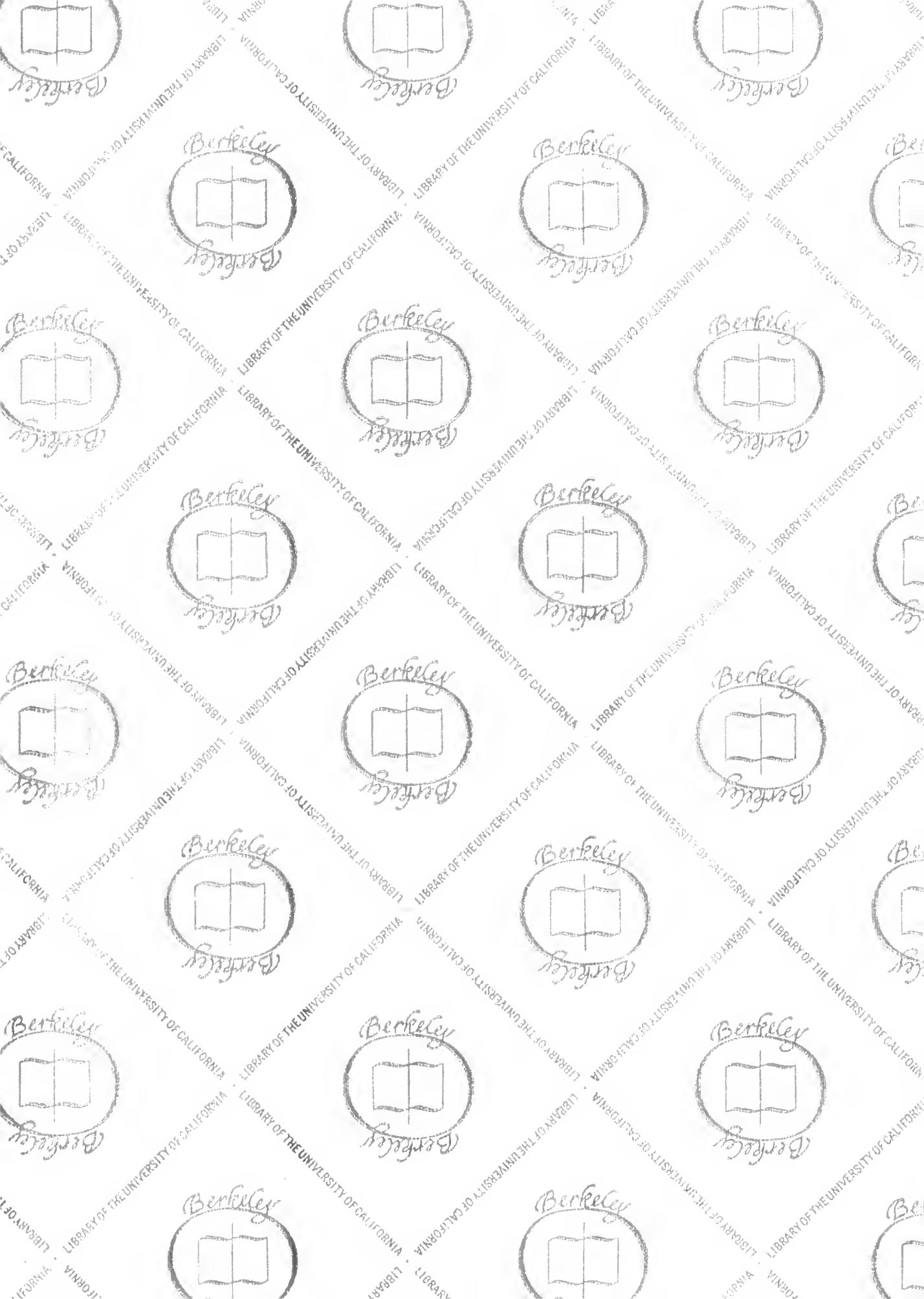
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Interview: Gift of Paul Machlis

Transcript: Gift of the Class of 1910



MARGARET MURDOCK
BELLE OF THE SATHER TOWER BELLS

Margaret Murdock and Paul Machlis

The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley
1980

Chimes players John M. Noyes, Frank Pilling,
Paul Machlis, and Margaret Murdock at the
Jane K. Sather Tower, 1979.
Photograph by Saxon Donnelly



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PREFACE

From 1969 to 1979 I was privileged to be able to supplement my experience of campus life, as a student and as a staff member at The Bancroft Library, with the unusual perspective of a player of the Sather Tower Bells. During that decade, I came to value Margaret E. Murdock, nearly sixty years my senior, as a delightful friend and colleague overflowing with absorbing anecdotes and remembrances. It was perhaps inevitable that our enjoyable conversations would conspire with daily handling of the treasures of California history at the Bancroft to encourage the preparation of this interview.

Margaret's half-century of chimes playing has been widely publicized. But short articles or interviews never allow her to tap deeply her well of memories. These interviews were an opportunity for us to share together her view of the bells, the University, and her father, Charles Albert Murdock, the first fine printer of San Francisco.

The interviews were conducted on the fifth and nineteenth days of February, 1976, first at the bell tower with the 7:50 a.m. concert, then at the Women's Faculty Club, tea cups in hand, and finally back at the tower for the noon recital. The bell concerts, as well as the interviews transcribed here, may be heard on tapes in the collections of The Bancroft Library,

The Class of 1910, represented by its secretary, Irene Coffin, generously provided funding for the transcription and typing of the text. Jim Kantor, University Archivist, suggested the project to Miss Coffin, coordinated the preparation of the completed volume, and offered valuable editorial suggestions. Nicole Bouché adeptly transcribed the taped conversations, prepared the final typescript, and cheerfully incorporated subsequent revisions. Willa Baum and other members of the Regional Oral History Office provided helpful advice on conducting the interviews and on preparing this typed version of them. The late George L. Harding, curator of the Kemble Collection at the California Historical Society, assisted me in the research preparatory to the interview sessions.

Margaret Murdock, characteristically modest about her achievements and unconvinced of the value in recording them, nevertheless made the interviews at all times a pleasure. At her home in the Berkeley hills, we sorted through suitcases of articles and letters concerning her father and the bells, stopping frequently for an anecdote or a tune at the piano. She carefully read the transcript and suggested innumerable corrections and improvements for the final typescript.

April 1980
Berkeley, California

Paul Machlis

CHARLES ALBERT MURDOCK

Machlis: One thing that interests me is that you have many of the same qualities that your father seemed to exhibit, in that you've kept very active and creative, and you spend time in various kinds of civic groups. I suppose that he was a strong influence in that way?

Murdock: I suppose so. I think I'm fortunate in having, probably through him, fairly good health which keeps energy going. I don't think I compare at all with all the activities he did so merrily until he was in his late eighties. I think he was quite ready to admit that his hobbies and outside interests interfered with his really being completely successful in his printing business because he spent so much time on other things. But that was part of his enjoyment of life and part of his kind of civic conscience, to participate in church activities and community activities. I don't compare with it but probably anybody who spreads around a little thinly has pleasure in doing it even if it's a fault.

Machlis: He mentions how he felt he had spread himself too thinly to become an expert printer. Even in his articles in the Pacific Printer and Publisher he asks people to excuse an amateur printer for writing.

Murdock: For an amateur he had great appreciation of really good printing, which is probably why he had the reputation himself. He had innate taste in style. I remember as a child hearing him being a little scornful of printers who mixed all their types and had sloppy title pages because they didn't stick to one font. He believed in simplicity.

Machlis: Did he ever reflect on where he got this taste, and also many other talents he seems to have? For instance, his drawings of Camp Ha-Ha and San Francisco I think are very good. And yet, he went to school only until he was fourteen years old.

Murdock: I don't know. I think perhaps New Englanders in general have a variety of interests and talents that they can call upon when they need to. He never pretended to be an artist, but I remember how easily he could do little sketches and how easily his writing flowed. He was a Sunday School superintendent and many Sundays he'd come home after church and sit at his desk and the pen would be sliding along and there would be editorials for the Pacific Unitarian, or little articles or papers. He wrote quite easily and while he sometimes went over and corrected his manuscript, you had the feeling that it had a rhythm that didn't make it difficult to do it all.

Machlis: Yes. Between the Chit-Chat Club and the Shakespeare Club I suppose he had a lot of encouragement for bringing out these talents, which he probably was very thankful for as an opportunity.

Murdock: I'm sure that it was helpful to him to be associated, as he was, with an intellectual group of men. The Chit-Chat Club members were mostly college professors and the Unitarian Club and the Shakespeare Club had lawyers and doctors and other professional people in them. I think he held his own. For somebody who had a very modest education he managed to compete fairly well with his essays.

I think I told you that he used to write on somewhat erudite subjects or political ones that were, perhaps, beyond his depth as an economist. It was Henry Morse Stephens who told him to write about things or people he knew personally. On the strength of that he wrote about Bret Harte in Humboldt County and about San Francisco in the 60s. When at eighty he was asked to do a book of reminiscences he wrote his Backward Glance. He had several chapters all ready, due to his Chit-Chat Club papers, and indirectly through the encouragement that Stephens had given him to reminisce. It was rather like the present interest in oral history. It was excellent to be able to recall the Indians in the Hoopa Valley, and incidents other people didn't know too much about and that were a part of his background as a young man in Humboldt County.

Machlis: So it was one person who asked him to write the autobiography?

Murdock: The church was having a party because he had been a Sunday School superintendent for sixty years or so, and a fund was taken so that he could write a biography, the Backward Glance. He didn't have to drag up from his memory all this material at the tender age of eighty because some of the chapters were taken from essays he had written for the Chit-Chat Club. Still, not when he was young--when he was sixty or seventy--but were there, all finished, ready to be put in book form.

Machlis: Those earlier talks from Chit-Chat Club... I noticed one was "Policy of Protection" and several others that were political.

Murdock: Yes. Those were the sort of things that I think Stephens thought were not his particularly strong point.

Machlis: The variety of what he wrote.... There's one on the "Book of Job," and one on political economy, one on Edward Rowland Sills, and then he did a long one on Hawaii, which I guess was from the trip in 1914.

Murdock: Yes. Whatever he did he took an interest in. Of course, he did know Silks, an English bachelor at the University, as he had known Bret Harte. When we went to Hawaii--again the church took up a little fund to give him this trip in 1914 and an uncle of mine provided the money by which I went with him. I remember that he studied up on Hawaii and, fortunately, had letters to the governor. So we had a chance to meet some of the interesting people there. He's the sort of person who could share the trip afterward by having taken some good pictures and having learned something about the background. He never would have been a typical tourist, just going and having a look. He had something to see that he was specially interested in and was happy to share it when he got home.

Machlis: He mentions that the Chit-Chat Club was "a post-graduate course in life and letters. And to those of us denied the privileges of higher education it has been our alma mater."

Murdock: I haven't studied these as much as you have, but I certainly know that he felt that way. He'd come back from a Chit-Chat and the next day we'd have a sort of résumé at home--

Machlis: Over breakfast?

Murdock: Over breakfast he'd be telling who had spoken and what the paper had all been about. The speaker for one meeting was the master of ceremonies for the next but they all were supposed to do a little homework so they could ask intelligent questions. Whatever the speaker had as a subject, the members were supposed to be able to be somewhat alert to what was happening.

Machlis: Did he print up programs for those meetings also, as he did for the Shakespeare Club?

Murdock: I think he must have. Yes, I'm sure he did because I know my brother, who inherited his father's position, secretary of the Club for a while, had meeting notices printed. I don't know whether it was résumés, but at least notices as to who was the speaker and the date and so forth of the next meeting.

Machlis: Do you remember him being particularly excited about certain talks? I know there's one talk before you were born, a talk by Horatio Stebbins on war. I think they picked two, war and peace, out of a hat and one person spoke on peace and he was chosen to speak on war. I think he spoke about Christ and his message of stirring people up and, I think in this little booklet on the Chit-Chat Club, it is described as extremely exciting.

Murdock: I'm sure there must have been. Of course, that was before my day, but father always had great admiration for Dr. Stebbins. Dr. Stebbins was a true intellectual. On any subject he would have something wise to contribute. Both he and Horace Davis would be likely to have a Biblical background for what they presented to the Chit-Chat Club.

Machlis: How long did the Chit-Chat Club go on? Do you recall?

Murdock: I think it's still going, and it started in, what, the 1870s?

Machlis: 1874. Four lawyers.

Murdock: I know father was almost a charter member, but for a long time he continued as the oldest member--the senior--because the four lawyers departed before he did in this world.

Machlis: It was a privilege and probably still is, I suppose, to be asked to join.

Murdock: Oh, I'm pretty sure it is. The membership limit is 24 so each member gives a paper once in two years. Walter Morris Hart and other faculty members here and at Stanford were loyal Chit-Chat people for a long time.

Machlis: Were members primarily Unitarian?

Murdock: It wasn't directly connected with the church, but it just happened that quite a few of them were members and if they had a guest speaker it was often an eastern notable. I think it was the Unitarian Club though that invited Ralph Waldo Emerson and Julia Ward Howe to speak when they came to San Francisco.

Machlis: Did the Unitarian Club meet regularly?

Murdock: I think so. I rather think that it was like any church's men's club that continued for quite a while. It just happened that under Dr. Stebbins a great many distinguished San Franciscans were part of that group. So, they were likely to be civic leaders in a good many ways.

Machlis: You mean it was probably a meeting of people to make decisions about the church's function, over dinner or something?

Murdock: It was less like a board of directors than a group of people, much larger than the Chit-Chat Club. Church members who had social meetings with speakers.

Machlis: Was the Boys and Girls Aid Society also connected with the church?

Murdock: No. It was established in the seventies before public agencies took over. It was the San Francisco solution to neglected children and problem boys who were wards of the juvenile court. I think it was funded privately. Senator George C. Perkins was president for forty years. Father was on their board for many years. I remember going with him up to their Russian River summer camp. Every year boys went up and picked berries and apples, and had a change of scene. They'd have a Fourth of July celebration with an oration and father was likely to go up to make the oration. They had an excellent director, Mr. George Turner. The building itself was out near Golden Gate Park. I don't know why they called it "and Girls," because it was always just boys. I think that maybe a few of them were not problem--juvenile court wards--but were just deserted children who needed a home.

Machlis: They actually stayed up there, near Sebastopol?

Murdock: Yes. They had a summer camp up near Sebastopol for three months in the summer. One year the boys earned 11,000 dollars. It was very well managed and a very necessary and well developed agency.

Machlis: Did you stay there for several weeks with your father?

Murdock: Oh, no. When we went up for the Fourth of July it was just an overnight trip. But it gave me a picture. I have a very vivid picture of watching three or four little negro boys starting off to go swimming. They were walking along an embankment and it was like an African frieze, this little silhouette of black figures, young and skinny, on their way to dive off into the river. A very vivid picture of what a nice summer vacation they had up there.

Machlis: I saw a pleasant letter from Luther Burbank. Your father invited him to join them in 1918 up there for Fourth of July. He said that he wouldn't be able to for some reason or another. He was busy.

Murdock: It was quite an institution, the Boys Aid Society--something that, again, father was personally interested in. So we'd hear a good deal about it at home and go out to see the school when they were having some sort of function. I think that I caught a glimpse somewhere in which Bruce Porter was reporting how much it had meant in the community--all the help that it had given to problem boys.

Machlis: How about the Shakespeare Club? That's something that I find interesting.

Murdock: That was flourishing, I think, in the 70s and the 80s. They had great fun. They had their monthly meetings at somebody's home and the members were assigned their parts ahead of time so that their lines were familiar. They didn't dress up. It wasn't a matter of putting on the plays but reading them with forethought and a little character study. Horace Davis was always the king or somebody rather noble and father was likely to be the comic character, the fool. Most of the women were school teachers who, naturally, were good readers anyhow. Again, some of them were more likely to do the comics and others to do the queenly characters.

Machlis: Was your father's first wife in these plays?

Murdock: I think not. She was always an invalid. When you see the cast of characters, she wasn't among them. My own mother was a member. It probably was one of the romances of the Shakespeare Club as was the fact that her brother, Ernest White, met Bruce Porter's sister through the Shakespeare Club. That was another romance developing from the Shakespeare Club in the early days.

Machlis: Was it after supper at someone's house?

Murdock: Yes. Father, being the printer, would send out the notices that they were to meet at the Sheldon Kellogg's or the Charles P. Osgoods' on Fillmore Street, so people would know when and where to assemble.

Machlis: Was it kind of an informal group of friends? Is that how it grew?

Murdock: I think so. Some of them were people who also went off to Camp Ha-Ha, but I think a good many of them happened to be Unitarians. That's perhaps just more happenstance just as some of them were fellow members of the Chit-Chat Club. Sheldon Kellogg and some of the other names that one sees on the cast of characters also are ones that one reads as giving essays for the Chit-Chat Club. There was an interlocking of the getting together--long before the days of the movies. Of course, they're the same ones that did go to the plays and concerts when San Francisco had them. But people had to do more making their own amusements and this particular group of people liked intellectual amusements.

Machlis: It sounds like much more creative use of spare time.

Murdock: I'm sure they had a very happy time with their out-of-work activities.

Machlis: Camp Ha-Ha and Camp Tinkle were part of this interweaving, I guess?

Murdock: I expect that Camp Ha-Ha followed Camp Tinkle. From those pictures in the scrapbook, Camp Tinkle, perhaps, was in too civilized an area. They had to get a little off for their summer camp. I'm pretty sure that most years Camp Ha-Ha was down in the Santa Cruz mountains, although I went to a sort of post-Camp Ha-Ha summer which was on the Russian River, near Guerneville. But that was about 1902 and Camp Ha-Ha itself had disappeared. Some of the people connected with it wanted to have a summer camp. It was kind of an epilogue to Camp Ha-Ha that I remember.

Machlis: Did these camps coincide with the Lark pretty much, in ninety--?

Murdock: Oh, I think most of them were still earlier, because the Lark was only a couple of years in the '90s and I think Camp Ha-Ha probably existed in the '80s or even '70s.

Machlis: Someone loaned the land to them? Was that the situation?

Murdock: I think probably so. I know that they talked about having meals at the farmer's house and camping not far off. So probably he had redwoods nearby and that was the place where they had their camp.

Machlis: So it wasn't really a formal camp, in the sense it had structures?

Murdock: Oh, no. They tented the night, as it were.

Machlis: What was the style of life? The Lark gives a certain attitude towards living--very joyous. Was this lived at the camp in some sense?

Murdock: I'm sure that it was a fairly bohemian group--the simple life camping and hiking and swimming. The time that I remember they had horses they rented and went horseback riding. They were people who loved to get out under the redwoods, have campfires, watch the stars and sing and enjoy themselves.

Machlis: Your father, being the printer of the Lark, did he join in with this spirit pretty much or did he feel that he was mainly doing a job for them?

Murdock: As far as the Lark was concerned, he was much too old to be in the group of young bohemians.

At Camp Ha-Ha he was always young in spirit as far as going off and enjoying camping. He would be first to have fun with it. We used to have bits of manzanita that had

Murdock: been carved into little easels for picture frames. He was very adroit at finding the right type of branch to turn into a little stand for a picture. So I'm sure that he was handy with his pocket knife in spare moments at Camp Ha-Ha.

Machlis: Your father was brought up in a rural environment and even when he came to Uniontown he worked in the wheat fields. So I suppose there was a connection with rural environments that he probably missed, living so long in the city. Did he talk about that much?

Murdock: I think he loved both his Leominster early childhood, and his Humboldt County young manhood and later childhood, you might say. He liked the outdoors but he wasn't one to brood over the past. I think he loved San Francisco--didn't regret the change of living conditions. Although I think probably the fact that when he was in Uniontown and learned how to be a tinsmith and learned how to help with the Indian crops and so forth, he was showing that Yankee ingenuity that enables them to tackle the different things that come along and work out ways of getting along.

Machlis: One thing I'm interested in is--you've mentioned his print shop a couple of times. I guess he brought you to the shop quite a few times when you were little?

Murdock: We went down when we were children. We lived out near the Presidio and you'd take the Union Street cable car which, as it got over down from the hills, turned into a horse-drawn vehicle to get to the ferry building. The "532 Clay St." was after it had become a horse-drawn car. The whole printing plant was above a market so that you'd have the smell of rotten vegetables and the cattle, the chickens and such. And the very rickety stairs as you went on up to the printing office. The printing office had a variety of presses: the little pony press and the large linotypes. It was fun to go and be taken in to see the bindery girls and be given little scraps of paper to take home to play with.

Machlis: Elderly women, I take it, these bindery girls.

Murdock: Bindery girls, even if they get to be eighty, are still girls. That was often a separate wing and I'm not sure whether that was just connected with father's printing office, or whether the bindery was used by other firms, too. As I look at the addresses, it seems as though Clay Street was just full of an assortment of printing firms, some of which of course might have succeeded each other and used the same plants. But the addresses were pretty close together, so I expect the handiness of having the equipment for binding and all the other processes might be shared by some of the other firms.

Machlis: That would make sense, yes. Your father was there a very long time, '68 to the earthquake and fire.

Murdock: Yes, there. And then, of course, he continued right after the fire. They were, for a while, over in Oakland at the Pacific Manifolding Book Company, and then down on Geary Street in what had been a car barn on Geary and Webster. Then Mission and Front where Blair-Murdock had its offices. Father was connected with that until about 1916. So he certainly was in the business for a long time.

Machlis: He's described that earthquake and fire situation so well in one of his articles.

Murdock: Yes. We have vivid memories. We lived out near the Presidio in sort of a three-story flat in which we had the two upper stories. So there was quite a swing and a vibration. My sister and I, who were children, were in a big double bed and she said, "What is it?"

And I said, "I think it's thunder."

We had a canary bird and the cage fell over. As father said in his report, the only lost head in the household was a little statue that fell and cracked it's neck. But the rest of us kept our heads and stayed right inside the house, and looked rather scornfully at the neighbors who went out to get dressed in the vacant lot across the street. It looked kind of shocking to us.

Father thought it wasn't quite the place for his motherless family. He'd been through five earthquakes before in San Francisco and thought it was a good idea to get away when you couldn't cook inside or light a fire. So we went over to Alameda, which meant walking around the edge of the blazing city. As we walked toward the ferry building, we saw all the North Beach Italians and Chinese on their way out to the Presidio to get away from the fire, with anything on wheels that they had--a bicycle, a coaster--or a sewing machine, or a sofa loaded with family possessions, with Grandma, and the parrot, pulling whatever they couldn't carry by hand out toward the Presidio, while we were walking--complete with bird cage--in the other direction to come over across the bay.

Machlis: You didn't actually stop at the print shop?

Murdock: No, I didn't. Father had been down and had a look at his printing office. But we didn't come across the bay until the next day and there wouldn't have been any chance to get down to Clay Street. We walked around where Ghirardelli

Murdock: Square now is and along all the docks to get to the ferry building. With the fire quite visible over the hills there--Russian Hill and Telegraph Hill, you could see the smoke and the flames--and it wouldn't have been at all possible to get anywhere near the printing office.

Machlis: How long did you stay on this side of the bay?

Murdock: Father's brother lived in Alameda. We stayed several months, enough to have a few weeks at Haight School--which, I think, was very appropriately named--but then got back to San Francisco in, probably August, or so. Enough to start school for the fall semester in the San Francisco schools.

Machlis: But your father continued to work in Oakland for a while?

Murdock: Well, Father at first was busy with San Francisco Red Cross activities, or at least part-time going over to help with distributing supplies and taking bricks off Market Street, which everybody did. As a sort of pay to get into the city, you spent a little time clearing up Market Street, and then went on about your affairs. He almost immediately got the printing office established there, by the Oakland estuary. But that, again, was just for a few months until they'd get back to San Francisco.

Machlis: One thing I was thinking was that for much of your childhood only your father took care of you. And he was so busy with his work and with his civic duties.

Murdock: Well, we had a German housekeeper for several years, but I probably took almost complete charge of my younger sister. I think children can be fairly independent if they have to be. Then we went to move in with a sister of my father's when I was a teenager--had a combined household with Aunt Lily and her daughter as well as father and his three children. By that time, I think the three children were fairly independent anyhow.

Machlis: He speaks in his articles in the Pacific Printer both of himself as an accidental printer--he tells the story of how he was just collecting a bill--and he also speaks about the taste he had in printing and how he objected to the current practices of mixing type faces and very exhibitionist sorts of things.

Murdock: I think that probably was instinctive and, perhaps, with an ear to the ground. And I think probably some of his clients helped with that because he did things for some of the

Murdock: University people. In those days, the University--Mr. Flinn, the printer--had very limited equipment, so Father would take over the journal of the astronomical society, or some of the early Sierra Club reports and other papers that required more variety of type fonts than the University had. I expect that when he was wanting to satisfy his academic clients, their own taste rubbed off a little bit on him.

Machlis: So, do you think that he consciously worked, I guess you could say as an artist, with his printing?

Murdock: Perhaps there was some instinct, and I'm sure that some of the people in his plant--like Mr. Vance, who probably knew a great deal more about printing than father did--had influence, too. I think some of that comes naturally and some of it gets to be kind of a habit of not wanting to put out things that seem distasteful to you.

Machlis: He's so modest in this article. I suppose that's probably one of his most often noted traits. In this one he just says, "I frankly admit that the fact of my being an accidental printer is distinctly prejudicial to the value of my testimony, but I hope it will not render it wholly worthless. At least it gratifies me to admit that no man not thoroughly trained to the business he undertakes to conduct need expect to succeed in it. Amateurs are heavily handicapped. Printing is for printers."

And yet, he was probably the most successful, and certainly the most respected printer, of the '60s through the '90s.

Murdock: I can just imagine that that's the way he'd feel about it--that he would have done a much better job if he had had more training in it. But I suppose even the professional printers can be too professional--can be thinking just of the skill rather than of the taste. I think a good printer has to have a combination, and he would have been probably better off if he'd known more about it. Or perhaps been a better natural executive. But at any rate, he had a happy life even if he didn't feel that he accomplished too much.

Machlis: He says that after the board of supervisors he "returned to printing in a mild manner." When did you feel that his active printing stopped?

Murdock: I don't know that I could answer that. I think his fame rests on what he did way back as a pioneer in the '70s and the '80s and '90s. He had, you might say, the competition of that younger group of excellent printers for whom San Francisco is now famous, because this was before the days of

Murdock: Taylor & Taylor and the Grabhorn brothers. Probably it is true that putting as much time as he did in civic activities in the days of Mayor Edward Robeson Taylor and his successors, did mean that he was a little out of touch with the printing business. Of course, toward the teens when he took in a partner who probably didn't have his same taste, he felt that he was out of the picture somewhat. So it probably was when I was in my teens that he would feel that he was pretty much through with the printing activity and getting more active in being the Unitarian western representative, where he visited the different churches up and down the coast.

Machlis: Did he maintain fairly close coordination of the coastal churches?

Murdock: I guess his own paper, The Pacific Unitarian, was a factor in keeping the Unitarian churches on the west coast together. Probably Boston thought he was a natural to be the western representative and travel about. And he enjoyed that. He, again, would come home from the trips up to Portland and down to Los Angeles, happy about having the visits with friends and seeing the activities of the different churches. So it was nice that he was given that opportunity to feel useful and active when he was no longer active in the printing business.

Machlis: Did he often travel with Horace Davis?

Murdock: That would have been much earlier. They went off to meetings together, I think, because Mr. Davis was a very active layman. One of the other people I remember him speaking about was a famous hymn writer, Mr. Frederick Lucian Hosmer. Father and Mr. Hosmer looked very much alike--they had the same little moustaches. So, at one of the meetings one of them said, "I'll behave myself properly and I hope you do the same," thinking that either one could easily be taken for the other and they'd better both behave in a very seemly manner.

Mr. Hosmer was a very gifted hymn writer and Father was very flattered to be mistaken for him, at times, at these meetings.

Machlis: Your father was well known in Unitarian circles. You told me that story about President Taft.

Murdock: Yes. Taft was a Unitarian and had been one of the national officers, as later was President Reinhardt of Mills. Taft came out for the 1915 Fair and I remember going to a reception to meet him. When father came along in the line, President Taft said, "You're the one they call Charlie."

Murdock: Since he himself was a Charlie, he was kind of amused. But I think father felt very flattered because President Taft had made some connection.

Another presidential story is father going back to Washington for some reason, at the time of President Roosevelt--Teddy. Roosevelt was interested in a civil service commission, which was one of the things father was interested in, and for some reason heard that father was active in the Boys Aid Society, and spoke favorably about the fact that things of that sort were helpful social agencies. So, father had a little contact with two national presidents.

In my childhood, the famous thing that he spoke of was having a document signed, in person, by President Lincoln. He was appointed Postmaster at Uniontown, so his official appointment from Washington bore Lincoln's own signature. So, the family felt that it had a little connection with presidents over quite a period of time.

Once, when I was about five or six, the schools all were sent to watch a parade for President McKinley. My brother was in school but I wasn't in school yet, but I tagged along and have a very vivid impression of all our waving to the President.

Just as I have a very vivid picture of soldiers for the war going off to Manila and going from the Presidio along Lombard Street, which of course now is the freeway, but was where they were marching along with their--I remember a goat and a dog, both of which were... What do you call these things that you have for your--mascots. Of course, being a small child I was very much interested in the dog and the goat that were off to war.

MARGARET MURDOCK: CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

Machlis: Your mother was a teacher and your father was very active in : the board of education and educational groups?

Murdock: Yes. Father was a member of the board about the time, I guess, they were married. I know that it might have been having a teacher-wife that encouraged him to take the initiative to see that teachers could take leaves of absence and have sabbaticals without losing their positions.

Murdock: When I went to high school, my art teacher still was very grateful to my father because she'd been able to go abroad and study and come back to her San Francisco job. Whereas when she first taught, if she had wanted to go abroad, she'd have had to resign and lose her position entirely. I think that, again, the teachers had the feeling that he was one of the really helpful members of the board. I hadn't ever thought that the fact that his wife was a teacher would make a difference, and maybe it didn't. I think he'd have thought of that anyway.

Machlis: I suppose they were both very interested and concerned about the education you got in the San Francisco public schools?

Murdock: Well, I don't know. Of course, naturally, my mother taught me to read before I went to school. She probably couldn't resist it. Since she died when I was very small, I was sent down to North Beach where she had taught, to be under the influence of some of her fine, fellow teachers. I think it was interesting. I was probably the only child who spoke English at home. You might say that the teacher had to be catering to youngsters without any literary background or anything. I don't think it hurt particularly. At least, I think it was a rather interesting experience to have your schooling in what might have been Italy rather than San Francisco.

Machlis: Which school was this?

Murdock: It was called the Jean Parker School, on Broadway. At that time, the boys went to Washington Grammar, which is now a car barn, up where the cable cars are housed. San Francisco had enough Catholic and European immigrants that you could go all through the public schools, from kindergarten until high school graduation, and not have it co-educational. The Jean Parker was an all-girls school and there was an all-girls high school. So, it was quite possible, if your family were good Catholics and didn't believe in co-education, that you wouldn't have to go to the private schools. You could go through the public schools and still not be contaminated by mixed classes.

I didn't have entirely that experience because some of my grammar school days were at Grant, which is out near the Presidio, and had all the little army children brought up on buses. We had a very mixed population giving, sort of, a much more intellectual variety.

Machlis: You mentioned the excitement of them coming to school.

Murdock: They had their horse-drawn buses. And they were used to drum and bugle corps, so the school had an excellent sort of marching band and youngsters learned how to play drums and bugles and all, and I'm sure that was the army influence that gave a little flavor to Grant School in the early days.

Machlis: Most of your father's civic work seems to have been somewhat unsought, in the sense that the state Assembly, the board of education...

Murdock: Oh, yes. I'm sure he never sought them except, you might say, he was appointed by Mayor Taylor to the reform board in 1906 and he felt that he owed it to the city to justify his appointment by running for re-election and being elected rather than just appointed.

Machlis: Twice.

Murdock: So he did, you might say, seek continuation on the board of supervisors, so that he served under James Rolph instead of just under Taylor. You might say that was only half seeking appointment. It was more or less a matter of being confirmed as a proper civic employee instead of just an appointed one.

Machlis: Did he share with you his feelings about various issues?

Murdock: Oh, perhaps incidentally. He was very much interested in being on the committee that re-named the streets. About 1908 or '09 San Francisco had, of course, grown and had taken suburbs. That meant it had two numerical series and two alphabetical series. It was a little hard on the post-men. So they decided they'd better re-name some of the streets, for simplification, and they'd give alphabetical names to some of the streets, at which time they started the Spanish series of Arguello and Balboa and Cabrillo, and then on through Moraga, Noriego, Pacheco, Ortega, and also re-named the Embarcadero, which had been East Street.

Zoeth Eldridge was largely responsible for some of it, but father was quite active in it. I remember hearing a good deal about that at the time and how much simpler it was for the post offices not to have to worry about one street north and another street south, or something or other, because of this duplication of names.

Machlis: There was a period when he was, I suppose, a minority member, on the board of supervisors, under the Workingmen's Party. I suppose those were difficult years for him.

Murdock: I think probably so. You have to expect that political ideas change. Of course, we did sort of feel close to strikes on the railroad and various other civic activities, because anything that was near and dear to his heart would be expressed at home, too. I think you did grow up with the feeling you were part of San Francisco history.

Machlis: And there was a strike in his own printing shop?

Murdock: Yes. I think his own pressmen were fond of him as an individual and struck somewhat reluctantly--were glad to get back to work. But I think his own instincts were in favor of the strikers in many ways. He realized that in union there was strength and that, perhaps, some things had to be done by that way.

Of course, the financial end of the printing business was always somewhat of a headache. I remember many a Saturday when he was worried about whether he could meet his payroll. It was a kind of a hand-to-mouth existence as far as getting the payments in, in order to pay out. So, I think you all had a feeling that there were risks in that type of business which, of course, has not changed much. It just continues as being a headache to meet payrolls, I'm sure.

Machlis: What kind of musical environment was at the home that encouraged you in your music? I've often wondered about that.

Murdock: I think both father and mother liked to sing. That's why I learned some of the songs that they had learned from Camp Ha-Ha. Then, I think probably because of fondness for the family, Mr. Weber, who was an excellent piano teacher, offered me lessons when I was quite small--shortly after my mother died. As a matter of fact, there was a family connection. His wife was a sister of my Uncle Ernest's wife--they were both Porters. So I used to go out and have piano lessons, which was fortunate for me, but I never really kept up with piano or took singing lessons. But I think music has always meant a great deal to me. Probably that also was an inherited trait.

Machlis: Your mother was a good musician, I guess. Did you mention that once to me?

Murdock: I think she, again, liked singing and she may have studied some, because I have quite a few of her music books. So, that probably meant that she'd had a little training in it. But I just remember that she sang very well and had a musical voice.

Machlis: One of the chapters in your father's autobiography is about outings. Did you go on many outings with him, the three children?

Murdock: No, we didn't. I think that mostly he used to go down and visit Horace Davis, who had a place in the Santa Cruz mountains. The outing I had with him was the one he took to the Hawaiian Islands. He didn't do very much traveling. He didn't have too much time for it. Perhaps he counted some of the trips back to New England for Unitarian meetings as outings in themselves, but I don't think he ever got very much out of the United States.

Machlis: What did his work as Sunday School superintendent involve?

Murdock: It meant getting acquainted with many generations of children. Besides conducting the Sunday services he was, again, active in social activities. They had a big Sunday School festival. In the early days, before my day, they hired Platt's Hall and it was the community affair that many people came to. He often wrote the little plays that they had and saw to it that it was a varied activity. He wrote "A Sixteenth Century Christmas" which brought in early carols long before there was a real interest in them. It was a nice little play which the St. Nicholas accepted and published and which came out in book form.

Then he wrote other little plays that would have words written to Gilbert and Sullivan tunes. He was quite versatile. He wrote "Of Hamlet the Dainty" which was a take-off on Hamlet that I really don't know very well. But apparently it was a great hit with the church activities. I don't think that was necessarily connected with the Sunday School but the Sunday School was a large activity. And, of course, he was always Santa Claus. One time around 1900 or so, he decided he would be a black Santa Claus, so he dressed up in cork as well as costume. At home we had a little room that was called the black and shoe shop, so shortly after Christmas he was polishing our shoes and talking a dialect. And I said, "You sound just like Santa Claus." Of course, I was innocent in those days and still believed in Santa Claus but didn't know the variety of parts that my father could take.

Machlis: Did he teach some of the classes?

Murdock: I don't think so. We had some excellent teachers in my childhood--a very flourishing Sunday School. I think his was the opening and the closing exercises. He was very good at it and very simple. The children were very fond of

Murdock: him and I don't think there were ever any discipline problems. It just was expected that you behaved yourself in Sunday School.

Machlis: We were talking earlier about how his autobiography developed. I notice here a note I made from a Pacific Unitarian Conference in which they endorse a proposal to secure 500 advance subscriptions to numbered copies of essays by Charles A. Murdock. This is at the time of his autobiography, I think.

Murdock: Probably so. They wanted him to write this and they probably underwrote it by getting people to subscribe in advance. It was published by Paul Elder. I know that there was nothing he had to do but to write it. He didn't have to worry about the financial end of it because it had been subscribed to before it was printed. I think the fact that there are only 500 copies has made it somewhat a collector's item.

Machlis: It is, yes. At Bancroft we have the letters you donated of your father's. Most of them are personal letters, or concerning his civic work. There's a letter from a Milicent Shinn.

Murdock: Milicent Shinn, I guess, was one of our first women campus graduates and famous first Ph.D.

Machlis: Yes, at Berkeley.

Murdock: She was a very good friend of May Cheney for whom I worked. I know that her claim to fame was that she was one of our university's early higher degree people. Father knew Ina Coolbrith and some of the women who were literary lights in the early days.

Machlis: So Kate Douglas Wiggin's connection with your father was also before you were born? The Story of Patsy...

Murdock: Yes. I do remember her and, of course, hearing a great deal about it. Father published The Story of Patsy for the benefit of the Silver Street kindergarten, and The Bird's Christmas Carol which was dedicated to little Lucy Stebbins and little Horatio Stebbins. It was father that saw to it that Mrs. Wiggin learned how to see that her books were properly copyrighted because she didn't know any of the business end of it. So she was quite grateful to her first publisher who set her out on the proper business end of a literary career.

I think I probably feel I know her better than I do because Lucy Stebbins talked so much about her. Dr. Stebbins's two children were ones who admired my father and also Kate Douglas Wiggin and her sister. Both the Wiggins and Father used to have lunches with the Stebbins family. Father would

Murdock: go with St. Nicholas in one pocket and candy in the other. I think they were probably the only visitors that the children didn't want to go back to school in the afternoon because the conversation not only was interesting but ones that they could share when father was giving lunch with them. I think in the same way Miss Nora Archibald Smith and her sister, Kate Douglas Wiggin, were welcome visitors at the Stebbins house and ones who liked children, so that the Stebbins children had great fondness for them.

When I went east with Lucy Ward Stebbins and her mother, we went up to Maine, or down to Maine as they say. I think it was the year that Kate Douglas Wiggin had just died but her sister Nora was there.

Machlis: 1923?

Murdock: '23. And we saw Quillcote, their home at Hollis. The character who was the wife of the stagecoach driver in Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm was their housekeeper and made baked beans and brown bread for lunch for us. So I felt close to the Rebecca story from seeing Quillcote and Katie's sister there.

Machlis: So you were friends with the Stebbins children?

Murdock: Well, they were older and had left California with their father in 1902 or so, when I was about eight. So I didn't really know them as children. But father did, before he was married. He was very fond of children and was a very frequent visitor in the Stebbins home before father himself married his second wife. Of course, I would later work for Lucy Ward Stebbins on the campus here.

Machlis: When did Lucy come back to California?

Murdock: She came back around 1914 or so. She graduated from Radcliffe and did social work in Boston, and then was appointed to be the assistant dean of women under Lucy Sprague, and shortly thereafter became dean of women. She was there for quite a few years before I graduated from college and got accepted as sort of the office assistant.

They were family friends and probably responsible for my feeling that I know Kate Wiggin better than I did because Lucy Stebbins talked a good deal about her.

Machlis: Your father had that wonderful picture of a lonely printer sitting over the press. He had that in his print shop?

Murdock: He had that in his print office. I remember being very impressed and touched by it, "The lonely printer dozes o'er his case, and dreams of happier days light up his face." I don't remember all four lines of it, but I thought that was a pretty romantic picture. He had that in his printing office. Whether he printed it or whether it just happened to be there, I don't know. It gave me a picture of the length of life of a printer and the memories that get connected with it.

Machlis: It's a very impressive picture, yes. He did some writing of some short stories that appear in the Overland Monthly.

Murdock: Joe, the Marine?

Machlis: Joe, the Marine, and there was another one, I guess in 1890, which I haven't found yet.

Murdock: He had quite a variety of talents. I think he probably would have liked to have done more writing but, again, he hadn't much confidence in his ability to do these things. I think it was easier to grind out, as he called it, editorials for the Pacific Unitarian that people couldn't turn down because there they were. But he wrote little poems and he wrote Christmas cards and little church homilies and such that pop up now and then.

He printed both for the ladies of the Alameda and Oakland Unitarian churches and also for the Society for Christian Work in San Francisco. Little booklets of churchly selections, which were popular in the time. I guess it was before the days when the churches all made their money out of cookbooks. At any rate, they'd have little homilies and such things by Minot Savage, or by William Channing. Every now and then one of his little brief sermonettes would pop up in one of them, which surprised me because he wasn't likely to put in his own things. But perhaps the ladies had selected these things and there he was. So he modestly would just print it along with the others.

Machlis: He printed some poems in the autobiography.

Murdock: Yes. He wrote a couple after the earthquake and fire of the stricken city lifting its head, and so forth and walking in the way. He had an ease of expression which made some of his things kind of quotable.

Machlis: And he kept very alert and active as far as his writing right up until 1925 when he was writing the printing articles.

Murdock: Yes. I'm surprised at that because I knew that he was working on these articles and anything that he was giving like that he was happy about. He was rather likely to share it a bit at home, that he'd been finding such and such. No, he didn't get

Murdock: into a dotage at all in his older years, which is nice. He was, I think, just about a week before he died, over at the City going to something at the church. I think some of his friends thought that his children were a little neglectful to let him go off and run the risk of falling. But he was the independent type and he would not have appreciated being held back by younger people.

Machlis: Where was he living at that time?

Murdock: He was living with my brother in Piedmont and still very active until the very last week of his life when he'd had the stroke. So it's easy to go that way when you haven't had a diminishing in your interest in life.

Machlis: How long had he lived there, in Oakland?

Murdock: Just a few years because he was with me here, in Berkeley, at the time of the fire for a little while. And then moved over to Oakland around '24 I guess. I guess about four years with my brother.

Machlis: So the Pacific Printer and Publisher articles...

Murdock: Those were done when he was over here.

Machlis: He was over here. He was working at The Bancroft Library.

Murdock: And I rather think he used the Bancroft a lot for it. I think he was very appreciative of having the opportunity to go over material there in the Bancroft and glad to be one of their senior citizens working, as people always have at the Bancroft when they have time to delve into the past.

Machlis: One amusing thing I found in the Murdock papers there was a handwriting character-reading by someone named Graffo. This was in New York, and she says "A man of refined instincts, bright intelligence, sympathetic, amiable, worshiper of beauty especially in the gentler sex, tender, affectionate but you do not appear to be over-constant. Ambition and energy, tactful, diplomatic."

Murdock: How very nice. I didn't try to translate that when I saw that in the thing, but I think that's very appropriate.

Machlis: Some of it is very appropriate.

Murdock: Very appropriate, indeed. Somehow it reminds me that San Francisco, for years, had what is called the Mechanics' Fair. For some reason father had a booth there once and he was

Murdock: supposed to be a fortune teller. These people would come in and whether he was a palmist or a card reader, I don't know. But he was very embarrassed because people took things seriously and would think that he really knew what he was talking about. That hurt his conscience because he was just more or less guessing. But there was one San Francisco character who came in and he was reading his fortune and he said, "You go every morning and go for a swim off the Hyde Street Pier" or something.

And the man said, "Oh by God, he knows me!"

He didn't quite fool him at that time but he had his own amusing experience of being a fortune teller. He didn't think much of it as a career because he felt that people could take these things too seriously and want further information that of course he couldn't possibly give them.

Machlis: He was active in the 1915 exposition? Certainly printing.

Murdock: I'm sure he must have been on some of the boards. And of course he was a supervisor at that time and therefore extremely interested and proud of what San Francisco was doing and pleased that the civic auditorium could be built as part of the funds that made a more permanent center than the fair grounds themselves. I think he had a very personal interest in the 1915 exposition.

Machlis: Besides piano lessons, what formed your musical background?

Murdock: Well, I went to the normal school and taught choral music to the young. You get familiar with quite a bit of music if you have to teach it to children. But, I didn't have any training on other instruments and didn't really keep up the piano much. So, for a good many years, the only instrument I really operated on was the bells.

Machlis: Did you sing in choruses?

Murdock: I sang in the U.C. chorus from the '30s on, for a long time, starting under Randall Thompson, who wrote the "Peaceable Kingdom." Then, of course, for a long time with Mr. Lawton. I enjoyed University Chorus tremendously; it was lots of fun. I think we sang for Monteux, Jorda, Hertz, and Ozawa; so we had quite a period of singing with the San Francisco Symphony, including some Milhaud works with Milhaud there, in person. You get quite a repertoire of the classics when you are in a choral group like that, as you remember yourself.

Machlis: Yes. And the Parthenaeias and Senior Extravaganzas had a fair amount of music.

Murdock: Oh yes, they had, but actually you're only in one Senior Extravaganza--your own--and while I went to the Parthenenias I didn't participate in them as a singer or actor. I just remember them as part of the campus tradition in those days.

Machlis: Did your father have connections with the University that in a sense made you automatically apply to Berkeley?

Murdock: Well, not particularly. Of course many of his friends in "Chit-Chat Club" were on the faculty. But I think it was just expected that any of the young people in San Francisco, if they came to college in the early days, would come to the University of California. My brother came, and there wasn't any thought of any other university in those days.

Machlis: So you commuted every day for two years?

Murdock: No. I commuted part of the time and then I lived on the campus, or in a sorority near the campus, or in a rooming house or something of that sort, so I didn't commute regularly. Then almost immediately, I started working on the campus--really moved over to be nearer the campus.

Machlis: What did commuting consist of then?

Murdock: Oh, that was a lot of fun. We lived out not too far from the Presidio. You had to take the California cable down to Market Street and then walk that last block with the commuters to San Francisco--so numerous coming up as a horde from the Ferry Building that you ran along the gutter to the Ferry Building and then took your ferryboat--which was always fun--and the yellow, Key Route train and then walked up from University Avenue to the campus, although you could take the Southern Pacific and take the red train which landed you on Ellsworth, on the edge of the campus. But ferryboats were very pleasant in those days; you could have a bite of food, or have your shoes shined or play a game of cards or feed the gulls--do a little studying. They were a very pleasant way of commuting.

Machlis: Did you teach one year in the City, after your degree?

Murdock: I had gone to the normal school to earn money to come to the college and taught about a year and a half before I came to college. I took the San Francisco Civil Service examinations as needed to be a permanent teacher there. After I graduated--I'd been on leave--I went back to teach there, and then decided I preferred working on the campus. So I returned to the campus and have been here ever since, one way or another.

Machlis: Lucy Stebbins invited you to be in the Dean's office?



Murdock: Yes, she invited me. That was something that was kind of in the family tradition--to be connected with the Stebbins family. I certainly enjoyed it. While I enjoyed teaching, I think I've been very lucky to be on the campus all these years.

Machlis: When you worked in that office things were much smaller. You were working for the dean of women, but I take it that you were around the president and the administrative offices.

Murdock: The dean of women's office, in California Hall, handled for women: housing, and employment, and scholarships, and loans, and academic advice, and a little of everything that's now scattered all over the campus. There were just three people: Miss Stebbins, the Dean, and Mary Davidson, the Assistant Dean, and the office girl who handled the window and the correspondence, and a little of everything, so it was quite a responsibility.

Next door were the dean of men's office and across the hall, the registrar's office, and at the end of the hall was the president's office and the comptroller's office. Practically the whole university was handled from the second floor of California Hall. As time went on, employment moved over to a separate division, and housing eventually. Of course, by now they're scattered all over the campus. It was in touch with every aspect of administration in those days.

Machlis: So you were in that job for about three years?

Murdock: I thought a little bit longer, but maybe not. I stayed in Cal Hall for quite a while because I was moved into the president's office as Assistant to the University Representative in Educational Relations, which is a title that has almost ninety letters in it. We were concerned with relations with junior colleges. That was centralized at that time in the president's office. Then, after Robert J. Leonard went back to Columbia University, we were moved over into the education department because we were mostly handling junior college staff to be sure that the University helped them get the best-trained people, whether they happened to be University of California graduates, or not. So, that moved over into a form of college placement office. Then, somehow from that I moved over into counseling and advising students. one thing sort of led to another.

Machlis: This was at a time when there was a lot of uncertainty about how big the junior college system should be, compared to the University, and what their relationship should be, wasn't it?

Murdock: Yes, and of course, I think Dr. Leonard did a great deal on that articulation of the different services. It was an interesting time to be in touch with the junior college movement and development.

Machlis: And then in education, from the start you counseled graduates on job possibilities?

Murdock: Some employment. First of all from the job aspect and then later, the preparation for service in the California schools, because the state credentials seemed complicated to people who didn't try to keep track of them. It was much easier to have the advice centralized so that people from other states who would ask about teaching in California, whether in elementary or college, or somewhere between, would come over to be told what the state requirements were. And the University students who wanted to go into teaching were sent over by their own departments. They knew what they wanted to major in but, for the getting ready for the certificate, the sequence of education courses, or the appropriate minors to go with their particular major was something else--it was much easier for people to say, "Go see Miss Murdock" than to try to remember credential regulations. Or a student who had thought he wanted to go into medicine and weakened, needed to re-cycle his courses to be a science teacher with math on the side.

Machlis: I noticed from your fan mail that by now many of your students are all over the world.

Murdock: They get scattered, and they move from teaching into the administration, and they get a little homesick for the campus when they hear the bells by surprise.

Machlis: So it was after you retired--was that in '59, that you went to the Women's Faculty Club and actively worked there?

Murdock: Yes, I worked over here at the Women's Faculty Club after I left Haviland Hall. That was a nice way to keep in touch too.

Machlis: Yes, especially since you had lived there until 1940.

Murdock: Yes, I lived here from '23 to '40 and one way or another was active on different boards and committees. So, I knew the Club, of course first through Miss Stebbins and Jessica Peixotto and the other founders. I was Miss Stebbins' secretary when it was established. It gives me a real interest in the Women's Faculty Club and pride in what the women have accomplished.



Machlis: It seems to have been connected with the department of household arts quite a bit, and I guess that Mary Patterson...

Murdock Well, there were more women, naturally, in that department than in most others and Miss Patterson and Miss Hope Gladding, both of them, did a good deal in the early days on the furnishing and the general equipment of the Club.

Machlis: Did Hope actually go to China to get some of this material?

Murdock: No, oh no, right here in Berkeley there was the Sanderson shop and the Churchill shop which imported things from the Orient. Then, of course, a lot of our oriental things here at the Women's Faculty Club were gifts from different people so that the older members will say, well, this came from Professor Kofoid, or this came from the Howisons, or Mr. Bender gave us these pictures. So, a lot of them have associations. But so many of those people in those days collected oriental things that the Club naturally inherited some very nice things.

Machlis: It seems, perhaps, that the University was a place where women had more prominent positions, perhaps, than in other areas.

Murdock: Yes, well, I think that while universities were never very cordial to women, the University of California reluctantly accepted a few more than others did, and they were fortunate in having some very fine people like Jessica Peixotto who certainly had plenty of brains--established herself in the economics department--and Miss Stebbins herself, and Dr. Agnes Fay Morgan and some of the other women who got the Club started were also people that the University had reason to be very proud of.

Machlis: The Women's Faculty Club, at the beginning, was very active in establishing, for instance, a hospital and I guess women's residences. Is that true?

Murdock: Well, I wouldn't say so. The hospital services were much earlier than the Women's Faculty Club.

Machlis: Perhaps that was the Prytanean Club?

Murdock: Yes, you're thinking probably of the Prytanean Society, back in the early 1900s, in fact, Dr. Mary Ritter and other women who were connected with student health. But I think Miss Stebbins and the dean of women's office were concerned with women's housing. There weren't any dormitories at the time that I first worked in the dean of women's office. It was something that was needed and I think they did a great deal for that.

Machlis: The Prytanean Club invited you to be an honorary member.

Murdock: Yes, and that was, I guess, because I was working in the dean of women's office and knew the people of that generation pretty well. It's been a wonderful organization as far as service to the University goes.

Machlis: You've been active in that group, as well as other groups, in service. Every once in a while you mention that you're working down at the high school or some other volunteer service. It's very impressive.

Murdock: Well, I don't know about that but it's always nice to feel that you can be a little busy and useful, if you can be.

THE SATHER TOWER BELLS

Machlis: Were you interested in the tower and the bells before that summer of 1923 when you suddenly found yourself a bell player?

Murdock: Well, of course, I never expected to find myself a bell player but I think that any of us who were on the campus in '17 and '18 were excited to be around when the tower was being built, when the bells were being installed, when we first heard them. So, before I took over from my friend, Edith Frisbee, I really had some interest but, of course, I never expected to be connected with them such a long time.

Machlis: So you didn't actually think of trying out?

Murdock: No. I think Edith Frisbee had been selected because Mr. King had had some boys who took up their girl friends at midnight, and didn't remember to play, and came at strange hours; if they forgot to play at six they'd come down and play at six-thirty, and that disturbed the populace.

Machlis: A 1917 Daily Californian says, "At the tryouts for assistant chimes master held yesterday, Glen Hoyden was chosen and F. A. Morgan was second choice." George Clark, the Class of '18, was chimes master in '17. So, it turns out that he was really the first chimes master.

Murdock: Yes. I know I always thought that Mr. King was, but Clark was the first, although he had a rather brief period of playing. Glen Hoyden was connected with the music department for quite a while and he composed for the bells. You'll find something in the King book by Glen Hoyden.

Machlis: George Clark went off to the service in January of '18, and Hoyden, a senior, took over. Perhaps King took over the next fall?

Murdock: He must have taken over then because King was playing in '18, I know. It was much to his credit because he was in the German department and his wife was German and, of course, anybody German was not popular at that time, and yet he played for the armistice with great gusto. I think that it was much to his favor that he celebrated peace when his own situation was a little unhappy because of the war.

Machlis: Did he do a lot of work in the music library, putting together the collection that we have?

Murdock: Well, I don't know whether he did it through the music library or just through his own interest in folk music and church music. He was a church organist and his selections for his book were ones that might have come without too much use of the music library. As a matter of fact, I don't think they had a very well organized music library in those days anyhow. What they had was just in the Main Library and not a very well organized use of it. I know when I first wanted to make use of the University collection of music it was long before the days of Morrison and what they had was just tucked on a shelf or so in the lower depths of the library.

Machlis: I was just trying to remember when that book of his was finished. Somehow the year '26 stays in my mind.

Murdock: Probably because...

Machlis: That's when he left.

Murdock: When I first played, I don't think he had that in shape to be used because I would have played from what was handy.

Machlis: He has some very definite ideas about bell playing and customs in the introduction there.

Murdock: Oh yes! I think that's a nice little introduction, to save some of the things like Beethoven for special occasions and not wear out your treasures by overdoing them.

Machlis: Yes, and about not playing too many of the same note.

Murdock: Yes, the tunes that have too much repetition-- In other words, a flowing tune is better than something or other that is more like an American Indian chant. I think he had some very good ideas--quite definite ones.

Machlis: Were you given three times a week then?

Murdock: I think I played a little more than three times a week, but Mr. King was a church organist and had rehearsals or activites on Wednesdays and Saturdays and Sundays, and liked his weekends off anyway, I guess, so that the assistant took on a program that was largely hymns because his tradition was Wednesday night and Saturday night hymns and Sunday afternoon hymns, so that in my early days I was on the campus seven days a week but most of my bell ringing was limited to playing hymns.

Machlis: I see. There were just two of you then, you and Mr. King?

Murdock: Yes.

Machlis: It seems that there was a smaller bell staff until the '50s or '60s.

Murdock: I guess so. I'm pretty sure I played more than three times a week because when I lived here at the Club, I'd chase over to play in the morning and right at noon, but I don't remember quite just what the schedule was.

Machlis: You started playing the bells right before the Berkeley fire, as far as I can understand?

Murdock: Yes, I think 1923 was quite a year. I was living here at the Club and playing duets with my friend Edith Frisbee, who had been successful in a try-out for the bell ringer. So I didn't even try out; I just inherited her job and started in that summer.

Machlis: She volunteered your name to Dr. King?

Murdock: Yes, I thought I was just finishing up her summer appointment under Dr. King but I think he found it handy to have a ringer who was living here, on the campus, and able to fill in for him on short notice if something happened in the morning--he cut himself shaving, or his car wouldn't start or--

Machlis: He'd give you a ring?

Murdock: For some reason, he'd ring here to the Club and I'd hurry up to the tower and do his morning assignment even if it wasn't my regular day. That was the year that we played for President Harding, who died in San Francisco; we tolled the bell. That was the same year, of course, as the Berkeley fire for which we summoned the students although, as a matter of fact it was the elevator man, I think, who played that afternoon to get the students to come and help.

Machlis: Oh. He actually played a melody, or just clanged?

Murdock: No, he just clanged sort of an assembly call.

Machlis: I hear you played "Scotland is Burning."

Murdock: That was a little later, in 1933; that was when Harmon Gymnasium took fire. It was being torn down anyway. It was just a kind of a wreck. I was up in the tower and there were quite obviously some flames starting down there. So, "Scotland's Burning" seemed an appropriate thing to play. But, 1923 had the fire and had Harding. A few years later Lindbergh flew west and President Campbell, being an astronomer and liking the skies, wanted people to be able to come and watch and see when he appeared. So I spent most of one Saturday morning up in the tower watching to see just when his plane appeared over Berkeley.

Machlis: What did you play?

Murdock: I don't remember, frankly, but it was something appropriate for the skies though I don't know just what. At any rate, it was something to summon people to come out and see what was happening. But, it seemed to me '23 was quite a year for the bells.

Machlis: I think now we notice that it's easy for bell players to go along with their regular schedule and have very little contact with their colleagues because the schedule works so well. But I suppose then you had quite a bit of contact with Mr. King since the bells were--

Murdock: Not particularly. It's always been a kind of a Box and Cox existence; if one's there, the other isn't. But Mr. King would make out the programs and I'd try to find, in the miscellaneous music, just what he wanted me to play because it came out in the University Calendar. He loved to give me a hymn done by a composer--Redhead--because I was a redhead and he thought that was very funny, to ask me to play something by a Redhead. But actually, we didn't see each other very often; we just knew who was going to be there. Of course, it is true that each player has a schedule and they don't really know each other very well.

Machlis: So he assigned every piece that you were to play at each concert--is that it?

Murdock: In the very early days, yes, because he turned in a weekly program and it came out in one of the little, University publications so people could know what we were playing on

Murdock: a given day. That was always a little game, to find them, because sometimes they weren't very easily found in our miscellaneous music and you had to know pretty well what was where in order to follow the schedule.

Machlis: I did find those calendars; they're in the UC Calendar. As far as I found they begin in 1926, but they must have been earlier because I think these were with Weikel as chimes master.

Murdock: Yes, well I think that Mr. King started that and Weikel continued to make out the programs.

Machlis: They stopped in the wartime, I think.

Murdock: Probably.

Machlis: At least the Calendar shrunk from four pages to one.

Murdock: They didn't bother with it anymore.

Machlis: No. And then later in an article, I think in the '50s, someone asked Mr. Noyes, "What are you going to play at such-and-such a time, and he said, "Oh, you're not going to ask me that, are you? I like to be able to play, you know, whatever hits me at the--"

Murdock: Be a little spontaneous about it, yes. Well, there's a certain advantage except, again, if the other ringers don't notice who's playing what they may have a run on a particular Welsh piece, or something or other that they like and it appears several days in succession.

Machlis: That's true.

Murdock: If you don't let somebody else know what you've played, who knows that the next person might not repeat you?

Machlis: I sometimes thought it might be good to keep a log to write down what we have played and that way you could see what's been done recently.

Murdock: Yes, or, as Mr. Pilling started to do, sort of date the things when he played them--

Machlis: Yes. That gets a little cumbersome though, after a while.

Murdock: Yes, it messes up the music a little too much. So I think Mr. Noyes's idea of being a little spontaneous is all right, except sometimes when you celebrate the weather or something they think you're being humorous when it's just coincidence.

Machlis: I guess, from the start, the week-day concert times were set, three times a day and Saturday. It seems that Sunday though changed quite a bit over the years.

Murdock: That's true, because we didn't have a half-hour concert and it seems to me it wasn't at 4:30, it was earlier in the day. But I don't quite remember for sure.

Machlis: Well, I have it listed at 3:50 in 1926, and then at 5 o'clock in 1928 and back to 3:50, I guess, for ten minutes before the 4 o'clock chime.

Murdock: Yes, I think that was so. And people studying in the library didn't like to be interrupted. The library closed at five so they moved it later so as not to disturb the people whose thoughts were interrupted by the noise of the bells.

Machlis: Yes. I think there's a letter in 1956 about changing it to 4:30. Four-thirty to 4:50, I think, Mr. Noyes agreed. It's interesting to look at those letters because one letter would sometimes change--you know, one person requesting that the library students not be bothered could bring about a whole change in the schedule.

Murdock: Well, I suppose the bells have wanted to please their public and if the public doesn't comment they don't know how many people don't like being interrupted.

Machlis: Yes. When did you start to make your own collection of bell music?

Murdock: I don't remember because you almost automatically add them little by little, especially as people give them to you or say they'd like to hear something or other, or you run across a collection. I don't think I ever consciously just started in to write whole books full, but they added up. Somebody said they would like to have Icelandic music because Iceland got its independence from Denmark in the 900s. So a little Icelandic girl brought a book of Icelandic music and I started copying it. Pretty soon I found that I was copying something that sounded familiar and discovered it was "The Last Rose of Summer." As with other folk books, they add other music to it after they've finished their native pieces. So I decided that that didn't work very well for Iceland. I copied it anyhow.

Other music would be brought in. When I lived here at the Women's Faculty Club, two of the physical education people went abroad for meetings and Miss Marshall brought me Swedish folk music and Miss Czarnowski brought me Norwegian,

Murdock: or maybe it was vice versa. That added quite a bit to the collection of Scandinavian music because they were folk song and dancing collectors anyhow. Those books added quite a bit to our repertoire.

Machlis: Yes. I noticed in the calendars of the chimes programs that the later ones showed many things that I think are yours; for instance, Gilbert and Sullivan, Norway, and Iceland. So I take it that, after a while, you were able to submit your plans for concerts. Is that correct?

Murdock: Probably, since whenever there was music it was put in little books and left up there--when Mr. Weikel was making out a program he would add some of those things; I think he liked Gilbert and Sullivan, too--so, you'd add those to what Mr. King had originally in his first books.

Machlis: Were you stuck playing just hymns, for many, many years?

Murdock: I don't suppose so but as I recall it those Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday parts of the schedule were mostly hymns, but I'm sure I played other things on other days.

Machlis: How was Mr. Weikel chosen to be chimes master? Dr. King got his Ph.D. and went off to Reed College?

Murdock: Yes, he went to Reed College. Mr. Weikel was a neighbor of his. I think it was before the days that they worried about open competition for jobs and he just appointed Mr. Weikel or rather, recommended that he be appointed and there wasn't any question about it.

Machlis: And where did he work?

Murdock: He was a singer and taught music privately, but he took on the job of running the elevator at the tower, so he spent a great deal of time in the tower, both ringing the bells and operating the elevator. It was amusing because, when people would come to the tower, he wouldn't let them know that he knew anything about the bells and he'd overhear their remarks. Then, if something particularly amused him he'd phone over to my office to say that somebody had looked out over the bay and pointed to her friend and said, "That's Goat Island," and the other lady said, "Oh no, its name is Yerba Buena."

So her friend said, "But Yerba Buena means goat."

And Mr. Weibel would phone over and tell me that, or that somebody looked at the little plaque up there that said "Ashburner Bell moved from Bacon Hall, William Ashburner 1870-77"

Murdock: and somebody said, "Wasn't he rather young to be a regent?"

Mr. Weikel thought that was a nice, humorous tale, so he'd phone over. He phoned over one day and said that the little plaque that was there said, "This bell was moved from Bacon Hall when the tower in Bacon was razed" and someone said, "Isn't that an odd way to spell raised?" And, somehow, you thought of the tower as being lifted as well as fallen. So, when he thought something was entertaining he had to share it with his fellow ringers. It sometimes interrupted my business, but that was all right; I enjoyed his little stories.

Machlis: So, was he tower guard from 1926 until '38, as long as he played bells?

Murdock: No, because he didn't take on the tower guard in his earlier days. It was just that, I think, his private music teaching wasn't too remunerative. It seemed a very pleasant way to spend more time on the campus.

Machlis: Was John Noyes picked by somewhat the same method, just word of mouth?

Murdock: I suppose so. I think he'd done a little playing and wanted the job, and asked for it. There wasn't any question about accepting him, and he was an excellent choice. I think he enjoyed it, as all the rest of us have.

Machlis: Yes. To people who ask about it, the selection procedure seems a very casual and somewhat mysterious way of getting staff members. A person has to be persistent and just keep asking and showing up, and after a few weeks we realize that this person may actually be serious.

Murdock: Well, yes, I suppose that's true. They sort of volunteer their services and if they really seem to want to do it they sort of work into it. I think they've all thought it was fun.

Machlis: There are a large number of student assistants. Did you train any of these?

Murdock: Oh, a good many of them. They'll come up and want to play and you let them try out. I think some of them consider me as having trained them, like Doris Briggs, and even Mr. Noyes, but a good many of them have happened to be up when somebody else has been playing. I don't think I ever nominated anyone particularly, except maybe Doris Briggs. Most of the others have just kind of made up to the chimes master you might say.

Machlis: Were there qualities you would look out for, or test pieces which you would give them to be sure that they could handle certain problems?

Murdock: Oh no, but I think if somebody was starting you'd try them on something simple and see whether they were fairly good sight-readers. But I don't seem to remember anybody who wanted to play who didn't seem to know how to handle it. It isn't really so difficult. You can't make too many mistakes with your twelve bells, but there have been a few people who didn't seem to have much sense of rhythm and there's not much to be gained if they don't seem to have that at all.

Machlis: I tend to ask new people to come to the evening concerts since they're not heard so much as the noon ones.

Murdock: Yes, I think that's probably true. Very few people are around at 6 o'clock so it's a less conspicuous time to make mistakes.

Machlis: I noticed that many of these students took on the weekend concerts. I suppose you were relieved of those after a while.

Murdock: Yes. I think that any bell ringer who worked regularly on the campus thought that five days was enough to be on duty and that Saturdays and Sundays were nice for something else.

Machlis: Yes. We had a student named Huelsman--

Murdock: I think he was the one that thought it was a lovely, bright idea to play on Easter morning, not knowing that we had done it for years in connection with the Berkeley Council of Churches. They'd write in, say, that they were having an Easter service at Cragmont and would we wake up the populace at 6:30 and then be around, after playing half an hour then, till they closed the services about 8:00, and play again. So, many early morning Easters I'd go up into the tower because that was one that the chimes master was always willing to turn over to an assistant. It was all right with me because I liked the hymns. But, Mr. Huelsman thought that it was a nice, bright idea and I said, "Fine, come along."

So, he was playing vigorously and I was playing vigorously at about quarter of seven one morning and the phone rang. A very sleepy voice said, "When do those damn bells stop?" Knowing in those days that the campus telephone operating was just on the campus, I was sure it was some sleepyhead at the Faculty Club who couldn't like being disturbed.

Murdock: And I said, "Seven o'clock." So, we went right on with our noise but it didn't give the person that phoned any very holy spirit that particular morning, to be disturbed in his rest by all of these Easter hymns.

Machlis: That was asking quite a lot of the bell player, to start at 6:00 or 6:15 sometimes, and then to stay up there for another hour until the service.

Murdock: Yes, you'd stay up and think of the people up by Cragmont. It was kind of fun; you felt that you were helping the community and that, perhaps, you were really reminding some of them to go up to their Easter service. Of course, sometimes you couldn't really hear it much from up there--it depends a little on the weather--but at other times they'd say afterward that it added to their program, to have the bells participating.

Machlis: You did that Easter program, as far as I can tell, for years and years and only recently stopped. Is that true?

Murdock: Yes. They don't have it anymore. I live up near there. Occasionally, when somebody else played, I've been to the Easter services. But apparently either the weather didn't cooperate or the churches decided to have their own sunrise services somewhere else; so they don't have them up there anymore. But it was quite a long-standing tradition and you probably found quite a few of the programs there.

Machlis: Oh yes. That phone call that you got--that early morning--is one of many complaints that we read about. In the Daily Cal there are many letters. I noticed a wonderful quote from a professor Loewenberg, in philosophy; "The bells are harsh and metallic. They're not only a pest but a form of tyranny. Each member of the community is compelled either to listen to them, or leave town."

Murdock: They weren't very popular in the early days and I'm sure that a good many of the faculty people were very critical. But it's all right. You always have to have different opinions. Professor Loewenberg was a very nice person but he just didn't care much for the bells.

Machlis: What has been the relationship between the music department and the bells? I'd say now it's one of tolerance, perhaps.

Murdock: Perhaps. I think the music department has never thought much of the bells. A few of the people composed for it but I don't think they ever took much interest in the tower.

Machlis: Yes. We have compositions. From Dr. Elkus there's a letter; he's encouraging the playing of "change music" on the bells. I've talked to some other people in the music department who seem to favor that, maybe because of their English education in some cases.

Murdock: I think that if they've been in England they have a sentimental feeling about "change music" and probably they think that bells are not appropriate for other than "change music," which is true of the British bells in general, I guess--that they much prefer it. Other people don't like the "change music" at all. But I think you're quite right, that a good number of the members of the music department think that the bells are appropriate for "change ringing," period.

Machlis: Did you copy down those Grandshire Caters?

Murdock: Yes, it's easy enough from the mathematical scheme just to change it into the sort of music that we're more accustomed to read. You could perfectly well do it from running down or up the scale but it's easier, I think, from the way we usually ring to have it in notation rather than numbers.

Machlis: I notice we have compositions from Weikel and King and some other bell players Have you yourself written for the bells?

Murdock: No. I don't think of myself as a composer. I've enjoyed playing other people's music rather than trying to compose, myself, for the bells.

Machlis: There was the composition by Professor Babcock?

Murdock: Yes. His friends were very interested in his university hymn. He was in agriculture, and a very nice person. There were several faculty people who, I think, have composed but not very many in the music department. Sir Arthur Bliss was more interested in the bells than other staff members. Before he was a "Sir," he was a visiting professor one year and he had his graduate students compose for the bells. Roger Nixon and several others were in that class. So we have a little collection of Roger Nixon, Margaret Bean, and Leon Kirchner, who later taught at Mills, and several of Professor Bliss's students wrote, I think, very nice little pieces for the bells.

Machlis: Who got the idea to conduct a contest for a bell composition? I think that was under Mr. Noyes.

Murdock: Yes. I think that was probably because we had a good many student pieces in those days. I remember one way we added to our collection of hymns was the students had a "Religious

Murdock: Emphasis Week" and they'd want us to give noon concerts, at least, in connection with that week. We'd say, "Fine. What do you want?"

They'd bring us little pieces so that we knew which ones would be pleasing to the Catholics, or the Latter-Day Saints or the Jewish students. They'd have a whole week in which each day one particular denomination was being featured, which was nice because I know with the Latter-Day Saints' hymns which we didn't know too well, it was nice to have them because not long after, one Sunday when I was playing, a couple of little children were up there. I asked them what hymns they would like and they were sure we wouldn't know the ones they wanted. But we did because it was shortly before that that we had collected our Latter-Day Saints' hymns. They were so pleased because they had just been confirmed, or whatever it is in their church. It seemed as though it was very pleasant to be honored in the tower by their own particular hymns.

Machlis: I certainly found that one of the most rewarding aspects of bell playing is when you're able to provide something very appropriate to either an occasion or some visitor, on the bells.

Murdock: Yes. I remember one evening when four people, two couples, came up. I thought they must be Scandinavian so in the elevator I said, "What would you like? Norwegian, or Danish, or Swedish?" Well, they wanted Finnish. Luckily I had some Finnish. The two men went outside because one of them had been a custodian on the campus and he wanted to show his friend the women's gym, where he had worked for quite a number of years. The two wives stayed inside and sang every song, which was a help to me because I didn't know the tempo. With their assistance I knew which was a lullaby or a march. My Finnish not being too good it was nice to have Finns who were so pleased to help out.

Machlis: There were many special events for which the bells were required: the graduation ceremonies, and the Charter Day.

Murdock: Yes. We played for Charter Day and Commencement and for Baccalaureate. Of course, one of the occasions I especially remember is when the United Nations delegates had a special meeting in the Greek Theater. Luckily, University Chorus was to sing and because of that we were given the pieces from South Africa and, of course France and England that we knew, and some from Mexico that we didn't know, which was helpful because we could play most of them on the bells. I remember playing them and hurrying up to the Greek Theater to sing them after I'd played them, which was all kind of fun.

Machlis: I found that book full of national anthems and it has all the days of each country.

Murdock: We tried to do that a little later, to know what day to play which. But the ceremony I remember was the United Nations in which we were ready to play something for each delegate. Most of them were there, except Russia, which chose not to come.

Machlis: There were the rallies before the big game, at twelve midnight. Maybe that's a more recent request.

Murdock: I think that's more recent. I haven't paid much attention to that.

Machlis: I used to dread their call.

Murdock: I remember spending quite a bit of time for Baccalaureate. Again, as with Easter morning, you played before the Baccalaureate exercises in the glade and then a recessional. You'd wait between times and hope for a signal that you could recognize, that they were rising for Saint Anne after the benediction, and be ready to accompany the Saint Anne. I remember Garff Wilson one time saying, "Do you suppose you could pause between the phrases so we could catch our breath?" I realized that after waiting more than an hour up there and watching for the signal, I was probably racing through the University Hymn with undue speed.

Machlis: I noticed several letters commenting on just how perfectly timed the bells came in, saying "How did you ever do that?" Of course there was some signal, always.

Murdock: Well, it was always hard with the Baccalaureate to catch the signal. Later they had a telephone in Stephens Union and they could really do it more efficiently. In the early days, somebody was supposed to wave a handkerchief, but handkerchiefs might wave while you were supposed to wait until they were over. Some people left early so you couldn't always tell from the people on the side of the lawn, who were more visible from the tower, whether they were just leaving early or whether everybody was rising for the benediction. We tried to time it and, of course, that was true with Charter Day and others. Eventually they had the telephone signal from the Greek Theater or the stadium but, in the early days, it was sometimes just by guess as to whether they were really through.

Machlis: The music for Charter Day was fairly standard each year, I take it. There was "All Hail" and "Happy Birthday," or maybe that was a more recent innovation of Mr. Noyes.

Murdock: No. I think we decided that if we followed student requests we might be playing "Happy Birthday" every day, so we would save it for the University birthday and make it traditional. When they stopped having Charter Day automatically on the 23rd it didn't seem quite appropriate, but it still seemed a Charter Day tradition, to count that as a birthday, whether it was the actual one or not.

Machlis: Did you play melodies, for instance, for the particular speaker who was there for Charter Day?

Murdock: We tried to, and, of course, we tried when the new president was to be inaugurated, to do his college song. I remember hunting up Swarthmore for--I don't know whether that was Hitch or one of the others--and having quite a hunt because I couldn't seem to find it identified that way. Then I discovered it was the same old favorite that they have at Cornell and Missouri. It was kind of the typical university hymn.

I also remember having quite a hunt for the Ecuadorian national hymn because it wasn't available in any books. Luckily, right there in the tower, there was a little book of bugle calls for a marine band, and there was the national anthem for Ecuador and one which, surprisingly enough, was in our range.

Machlis: Yes. Going through the music up there I see some books which look very strange and I'm sure there's a story behind each one.

Murdock: Often there was a story on just when it came and who suggested it, which was always kind of fun.

Also, you found that certain people listened at certain times. For quite a while I used to serenade one of the French professors, who actually was British, and had an eight o'clock. He loved to hear the good, old, English marching songs and such. So, I'd serenade him, knowing that he was walking down to the campus. Almost always he'd phone and say, "Thank you" because he knew I was playing for him.

Machlis: You played for several memorial concerts, for Dr. Deutsch and for John F. Kennedy?

Murdock: Yes. When we could participate in University memorial services or other occasions, we did. Mr. Noyse and I had a lot of fun, at the end of World War II, when we celebrated the armistice. Both of us went up there--I guess those were the days when we were the only two ringers--and we took turns

Murdock: for a couple of hours, playing everything that we could find that seemed to be patriotic or gave us a chance to exercise our own pleasure at the armistice.

Machlis: During the war the budget was restricted and there was a time when there was no money to pay the bell players.

Murdock: Yes. We kept on playing, and enjoyed it. The students got a little bit disturbed and there were letters to the Cal. This was one time when we found out that people seemed to enjoy the bells. Usually the letters were complaining and the idea was, why have them? But at that time, when we went off of the payroll, we discovered that people thought that it was something that they missed.

Machlis: The Alumni Association came up with some money.

Murdock: Yes. The Alumni Association was the pressure by which we went on, plus the pay was never very large. But at least, I think, the Alumni Association felt that it had accomplished something when we were recognized, officially, again.

Machlis: The bells, I guess, were also used as a signal and disaster call at various times? Or at least for training?

Murdock: Well, yes, I guess so. I don't seem to remember too many occasions. Of course when the Berkeley Fire came they tried to summon the students. I don't seem to remember too many incidents.

Machlis: I guess I was thinking of some letters to John Noyse about ROTC drills, and having the bells give the signal. The first time the bells were played, in 1917, was for--it wasn't the Stanford-UC game, but it was a very big game.

Murdock: Yes. I think I remember that they started in for athletics.

Machlis: They had devised a little system to give the score in the game, that Cal's score would be on a low bell, I think it was, and the other team on a high bell, and they would ring it the number of points they got. I thought it was very ingenious.

Murdock: That does sound ingenious. That's a new one to me. I remember that Mr. King, I guess it was, said on my Saturday night if the University had won we'd play Cal songs and if they hadn't, we'd stick with our faithful hymns that we ordinarily played. That was one way of letting the non-game-goers know how successful the games had been.

Machlis: The bells have had a close tie with football, probably from the very beginning, in that we've always played the tunes on Friday noon. Was that a tradition started by King, do you think?

Murdock: No, that's fairly recent, having that every Friday. We didn't do that in the good old days, but we did have them on Saturday night if the team had won, and on the days for meetings or rallies, or things of that sort, but not a weekly affair.

Machlis: There was that incident about the, so-called, fascist hymn during the wartime, that you mentioned to me. I thought that was quite delightful.

Murdock: Yes. One morning I'd been copying folk songs and played a group of Italian ones and thought one of them was particularly attractive. When I got to the foot of the tower, here was a little freshman with his paper bag of lunch and flashing dark eyes.

"Why were you playing the Fascisti Hymn?"

And I said, "Oh, I was just playing some folk songs."

"Well, you played the Fascisti Hymn."

I was summoned in to the president's office by Mr. Deutsch as to how I could have done anything so unpatriotic. Where did I get the book?

"Well, at the Co-op, the student store, in a little book that was done for language classes." I wasn't good on my Italian at that time and didn't realize this one had talked about brown shirts. So, I marked it in our book, "Fascisti Hymn, Do Not Play." I think that, perhaps, now we could get by with it and nobody would mind. It was a very pretty tune.

Machlis: It is. I copied it out of your book and I thought, "Oh, what a beautiful tune." And yet I did write "Do Not Play" because I thought there's no use repeating that incident.

Murdock: There was a time, I think in Mr. Noyes's playing of the Austrian hymn when some the the Jewish refugees complained bitterly, and Mr. Deutsch defended Mr. Noyse and the rest of us; that Haydn had written it long before it had any other connotation and they should accept the fact that it was a nice piece of Haydn and not take it personally.

Machlis: Yes. One tradition which I think is not appreciated very much now is the "Danny Deever" tradition.

Murdock: Yes. That, I think, was Mr. Weikel's good idea. We always did it on the eve of finals and enjoyed--tried to give people a little feeling that the end was coming. Mr. Weikel started

Murdock: that and, I think, John Noyse added "One More River to Cross" or a couple of other pieces that he thought were appropriate for the last class of the semester.

Machlis: A little more positive?

Murdock: I think that the current generation of students doesn't know "Danny Deever" from "Yankee Doodle." I think it's only the faculty and some of the alumni on the campus, who really get the proper trembling sensation when they hear "Danny Deever."

Machlis: I think maybe a little word to the Daily Californian towards the end of the quarter and an article, for a couple of quarters, might get people interested again in it.

Murdock: Oh yes. It was one of Kipling's Barrack Room Ballads and a very gloomy one about "hanging Danny Deever in the morning." The melody was composed by Damrosch. And, at that time, it was done by some of the singers you heard in concert and the people recognized it. It's only recently that it's become unknown.

Machlis: Were you there when Alex Templeton visited the bells and it hit the newspapers?

Murdock: I was there but I wasn't up to watch him play. That was a big event, apparently, in the history of the bells. You probably found quite a few clippings about that.

Machlis: I suppose you've had your share of adding little popular tunes here and there, certainly Gilbert and Sullivan.

Murdock: I know that some of our friends teased me because election day seemed to be the right time to play about "the little liberal" or "the little conservative" from Iolanthe. There were quite a few Gilbert and Sullivan fans on the campus who always liked it and enjoyed it. But they knew perfectly well that when you played gems from The Pirates of Penzance you weren't doing "Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here;" you were doing "Pirates."

Machlis: There was a little story about the union strike at that time.

Murdock: Yes, I remember that incident, when the gardeners and other employees on campus were on strike. It was shortly after the movie Snow White so that you could play "Hi, Ho, Off to Work We Go" and "Work, For the Night is Coming," and other things that seemed appropriate for non-strikers. I think that kind of amused them; they didn't take it too seriously, and they didn't mind being teased.

Machlis: Yes. I've always felt that if done cautiously, a little bit of timely humor on the bells is very good, although I suppose, after that one mistake during the war, there have been other unfortunate incidents.

Murdock: Well, people sometimes take them too seriously, but I don't think that should prevent any of us from being slightly facetious at times; it doesn't hurt.

Machlis: Yes, they do take it seriously. For instance, when the bells were being repaired and you played a scale up and down.

Murdock: Yes, that was amusing. They were tuning them and wanted me to test the tension. I started the Doxology and somebody phoned the president's office and said, "Did the legislature pass the budget?"

Machlis: The bell wires have required much repair in recent years. It's quite a challenge when the "C" bell goes out at the beginning of a concert and you have to, suddenly, think of all the tunes you have that are in the key of "D".

Murdock: Yes, that's true. Of course, it's the "G" that you're more likely to break because you play it for everything. It's almost impossible when you break it. When the "C" goes you can switch to other keys and get along all right, but when your "G" goes you need it in practically everything--and I think one of my bosses said you might as well just stop playing if you break your "G"--not attempt to fudge.

Machlis: One thing about children and the bells. Harold Lyman always says that the louder you play, the louder they scream.

Murdock: Yes.

Machlis: But they do love the bells, don't they?

Murdock: They get quite a thrill out of it. As you say, the sound increases their own sound volume and it can be a little noisy, outside and in, but they like hearing "Three Blind Mice" and such little ditties. It's kind of fun to amuse them, and almost always if we're playing those it's because some children are up there, as you probably realize yourself. If you have quite a few of them up there you might just as well give them some that they're familiar with.

Machlis: Sometimes I'll put one of them each on a bell--

Murdock: Oh, you do?

Machlis: And then tap them on the head and that's when they play their bell.

Murdock: Oh, good. I haven't quite tried that with the young but I'm sure they would go home and say they have played the bells, with great gusto.

Machlis: I guess there was a problem with children getting their heads stuck in the pillars there, for a while.

Murdock: Yes, before they had the glass. I remember a little boy stuck his head out and his ears caught. He was there for quite a while. They finally got some Vaseline and were able to release him but I think he got frightened and his head swelled a little. For years that dark spot of the Vaseline reminded me of the poor little lad. I wasn't there when it happened but you could see the remains of his tragedy.

Machlis: But then the glass was put up in '61, after the suicide.

Murdock: Yes, and I think it's changed the sound a little bit in some ways. But it certainly was a necessary protection.

Machlis: There are some letters to John Noyes--someone saying he feels the bells could be much more publicized and made more popular. For instance, the noon concerts were opened to the public and he thought that the tower guide could be more of a public service agent. Do you remember a change in attitudes?

Murdock: Not particularly. Of course, I think that Mr. Lyman has done wonders in making the tower guide a campus host, but I think the bells get enough publicity. As you know, in the early days the programs were listed. If people wanted to hear a particular thing, or perhaps ask for it, they could have their request followed by doing it in advance and saying they'd like to hear Netherlands music or something, on a particular day. I don't think they need much more publicity than they've had.

Machlis: There's a wonderful, and sad article about a Tower Guide named Vern Elliott, who was the guide when it was closed down to put the glass screening up. I guess he loved working at that job so much that they opened it on Charter Day one year and he had a heart attack, right there at the door.

Murdock: Yes, I remember. That was a tragedy. I think that, over the years, a good many of the people that have run the elevator have been people who had worked in the campus as custodians, and so forth and were not in too good health; not supposed to do anything as strenuous as they had done. Possibly his

Murdock: heart had been a problem for some little time. I know there was quite a period when I'd see people in the tower who had been over in Haviland and were given an easier job even though climbing the steps wasn't too easy. Running the elevator certainly wasn't too strenuous a job.

Machlis: It's fortunate that Mr. Lyman has made it such a rewarding task.

Murdock: Oh, he really has done a lot. Of course, Mr. Weikel considered himself somewhat of a host. I think those are the two, plus Mr. Elliott, who had had a special pleasure out of being there in the tower.

Machlis: I'd say two of the countries which have a special place in the bells are Japan, partly because we have a sister city--Sakai--and also you seem to have played a fair amount of Indian music, at least in 1949-50. Someone arranged some Indian ragas for you?

Murdock: Yes, I remember. I was in Haviland and a little girl came over--one of our Hindu students--and wanted some Indian music. We didn't have any at that time so I said, "Bring us what you'd like to hear."

She wasn't particularly musical but got her friend to copy down things that she sang. She was a rather persistent little gal and wanted them. We played them quite often and then I thought that we had overdone it and set them aside for a year or so. But one night I didn't know what to play and got out my Indian music, just for my own enjoyment. When I got to the foot of the tower there was a breathless Hindu young man. He'd run all the way down from International House when he heard these things and he said, all out of breath, "and I knew every number" in his very British voice. That was the time when we really did hit the bull's eye with somebody that you could personally please.

Machlis: I guess you were influential in having Doras Briggs become assistant chimes master?

Murdock: She credits me with having done so, and I know she certainly enjoyed it--was a very good player. I don't remember too well why she gives me the credit for breaking her in and getting her started but it's nice to get credit, even if you don't deserve it.

Machlis: She's probably the only member of our staff who actually had an advanced degree in music.

Murdock: I think so. I think most of the bell ringers haven't claimed to be professional musicians particularly.

Machlis: I'd say that's one of the peculiar aspects of our staff situation. We tend to get people who have nothing to do with formal music training, or very little--you know, they play organ in a church, or something like this.

Murdock: Yes. Most of them have had organ or piano, or some instrument and have taken it on kind of as a hobby. I don't know how many of them have been called singers, but I think that's probably a help in being interested in the variety of folk music that's available.

Machlis: In many articles the tower pranks are mentioned. I think the bells probably have had their share, too.

Murdock: Oh yes. I've been up there when they've tossed baseballs over to be caught, and when the pink rabbit was put on top, and when they've rolled down banners and things of that sort.

Machlis: Mickey Mouse.

Murdock: I think that it's nice that the students have a kind of fond memory sometimes of something that they did in which the tower was involved.

Machlis: One thing which has cropped up from time to time is the possibility of additions to the bells.

Murdock: Oh yes.

Machlis: Was Mr. King interested in this?

Murdock: Oh yes, I think all the bell ringers are. In fact, Mr. King wrote his first book assuming that we had fifteen bells rather than twelve and had to pull in his horns and do another collection that didn't include those extra bells. There was never a time when they hadn't hoped to have just a few more. I don't think we've ever been too ambitious about having a real carillon but a set of chimes that has fifteen or twenty or so would give us a much wider repertoire.

Machlis: What is your own feeling about, perhaps, a full carillon?

Murdock: It would be nice, but I think we could get along perfectly well with a set of bells. I think sometimes a carillon encourages you to be too ambitious and it wouldn't fit too well with the campus repertoire to try to do all of those elaborate things that they can do at the Bok Tower.

Machlis: Certainly we have a tradition of simple melodies and the kind of thing that people hear as they walk across campus--not so much a formal concert situation. I think it might be changed if we were to get so many bells.

Murdock: I suppose so. I suppose any traditionalists have a sentiment for the way they have been operated, and with a fair degree of success, I think. I think it's surprising how many tunes we can play with our twelve bells.

Machlis: I suppose the one thing that in recent years has been notable is the great amount of publicity given you?

Murdock: I think that's plum silly, but I suppose the first fifty years they take for granted and after that they're a little surprised that anybody has the health and energy. I think it's kind of an embarrassment. I could get along perfectly well without it.

Machlis: And now you'll be on "To Tell the Truth."

Murdock: Well, I don't know what that will be all about. You have to take it in stride, I guess, if it comes, because you certainly don't seek it. But if they get interested, there's nothing much you can do about it.

Machlis: One fun thing, going through your letters, is to see the variety of friends you have, and people whom you perhaps have completely forgotten who write to you and tell you how much they've liked the bells. I notice Herb Caen writes to you.

Murdock: That's always a complete surprise. It's always a complete surprise because you think the bell ringing is completely anonymous. A lot of people think it's mechanical--that there isn't anybody there. That's the only heart-warming part of this publicity, to hear from former students who got teaching credentials, or people who just get interested in the bells, or remember that they heard them when they were getting married, and on a honeymoon.

I don't know whether you heard my latest--from Texas--this woman wrote that she and several other Navy wives came out to bid farewell to their husbands who were going overseas on the Pacific, and came over to Berkeley and were sitting on the campus waiting for one of them who was being interviewed. All of a sudden the bells rang out with--what was it?

Machlis: "Over the Ocean" or "Going Out to Sea?"

Murdock: Yes. "Bobby Shafter's Gone to Sea," which doesn't seem a very appropriate one but it sort of set them into weeping and thinking of their absent husbands. That was an occasion in which they took it very personally.

Machlis: I know from my own experience that being a bell player is a unique position on campus. I think people have a very fond feeling towards the bells--also a bit humorous. Over so many years I suppose you acquire a certain renown among people on campus.

Murdock: I think that it's much better to be anonymous and keep it dark. Of course, in the early days the bells weren't very popular and you certainly didn't want people to know that you were connected with them. Now you don't know whether they connect you with the bells or not. At least we've had the fun of playing, as you know. You do it for your own amusement, as they say, rather than for whatever people might be thinking about it.

Machlis: It certainly made your fifty years on campus special.

Murdock: Oh, it's added immeasurably to it. It's been really a privilege. I think that most of us who have done it would be happy to do it just for the fun of it rather than counting it as a University job.

Machlis: What about the incident of the little boy?

Murdock: Well, this letter came from somebody who worked over at the nursery school. She remembers:

One of the little children who was a very alert small boy, somewhere in the neighborhood of two and a half years old, whose father delivered him each morning at nine and collected him a very few minutes after twelve noon while the chimes were playing. Very soon the child recognized the playing of the chimes as the signal that his father would be arriving. He always stopped whatever he was engaged in doing and got by the gate, ready for his dad.

One morning, very soon after his arrival, the chimes began to peel out in a most joyful manner. I've forgotten what was the special occasion--Charter Day, possibly? Anyway, the small boy recognized the signal for his father's arrival and got to the gate. The playing went on and on, and we were powerless to explain to him what had happened. It was a long, long, sad morning for us all. I bet that you, or whoever was playing that morning, had no idea of the emotional havoc you were creating.

Murdock: It reminds me a little of the time when the Prytaneans were having an initiation in Stephens Union, as they usually did. One time they didn't have as many as they usually do to initiate. We always played for them at six o'clock--their hymn--and that time, quite obviously they were going to get through before six. So, one of the members was stationed at the window to wave to me when it was time to do the hymn. I did it at about quarter to six and all the men over at the Faculty Club dropped their billiard cues, or their cards, and stormed the dining room fifteen minutes before the doors opened. So, it was like the little boy, somewhat. They responded to the signal. After that we told the Prytaneans that we would play at six o'clock or not at all. We wouldn't fit into their schedule when it disturbed so many of the other people on the campus.

Machlis: It's true. I've been told by people that if the bells for some reason are not played at noon they'll miss their class or their appointments, even though the automatic clock strikes twelve times.

Murdock: They listen for it. Of course, I used to feel particularly responsible in the morning because people at I-House would know whether they could have another cup of coffee, or more toast. When ten minutes of eight came you figured that it was a timely schedule for the people with eight o'clock classes. I don't think I worried much about the bells at noon, but I thought the ten-to-eight concert was a very important one to be on time.

Machlis: Yes. the bells are something everyone on campus has in common. Even though they're a lighter part of campus life, they're something which everyone can share with other members of the campus.

Murdock: Whether they like it or not, there they are. Some of them very much take it for granted and others, I think, really do stop to listen and wonder.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

CHARLES A. MURDOCK was born on 26 January 1841 in Leominster, Massachusetts. His family moved to Uniontown, California in 1855 and later to San Francisco. He worked as a bookkeeper and assistant manager for the M. D. Carr & Co., a San Francisco printing office, acquiring a partnership in the firm in 1867, and becoming managing partner five years later when the name of the firm was changed to C. A. Murdock & Co. The business was nearly destroyed in the earthquake and fire of 1906, but was revived as a partnership with Ralph Kirkham Blair, who changed its name to The Blair-Murdock Company in 1911. Murdock retired from business four years later. He served on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, Board of Education, and Civil Service Commission, and he participated widely in charitable, educational, and religious organizations. He wrote A Backward Glance at Eighty (San Francisco: P. Elder and Company, 1921), Horatio Stebbins, His Ministry and His Personality (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921), and edited the Pacific Unitarian from 1892 to 1928. He is the subject of a biography by George L. Harding entitled Charles A. Murdock, Printer & Citizen of San Francisco (Berkeley: Tamalpais Press, 1973). He married Alice J. Meeker in 1871; seven years after her death in 1884 he married Winifred White, who died in 1903. He died in Oakland on 11 January 1928, leaving a son, Osgood, and two daughters, Margaret Elliot and Edith King.

MARGARET E. MURDOCK was born on 22 June 1894 in San Francisco. She attended San Francisco public schools and the University of California at Berkeley, receiving her A.B. in Economics in 1918 and her M.A. in Education in 1925. She served as assistant to the dean of women at the University and as assistant to the examiner of schools in San Francisco before accepting the position of counselor with the U.C. School of Education, which she held from 1928 until her retirement in 1959. She has played the Sather Tower Bells since 1923 and has been the subject of numerous newspaper, magazine, and television features.

ROSTER OF CHIMES PLAYERS

Chimes masters

George Clark, 1918
Glen Hoydon, 1918
Henry Stafford King, 1918-26
Charles Weikel, 1926-37
John M. Noyes, 1938-73
Frank Pilling, 1973-

Associates

Margaret E. Murdock, 1923-
Patricia Lawrence, 1954-66
Doras M. Briggs, 1953-72
Paul Machlis, 1969-79

Assistants

F. A. Morgan, Jr., 1917
Edith Taylor, 1922
Edith Frisbee, 1922-23
John Cheney, 1933
Curtis Axel, 1951
Wedell E. Golder, 1958
Larry Seifer, 1961
Lois Keller, 1961
Lawrence Huelsman, 1950, 1958-63
Pauline Wyckoff, 1964
Susan King, 1962-67
Leroy King, 1967
Roger Sokoloff, 1967
Lee Machlis, 1968
Margo Leslie, 1969
Marilyn Saarni, 1971
Phoebe Woolbert, 1968-71
Marina Roseman, 1971-73
Susan Keefer, 1971-73
Pierre Serronde, 1972-74
Jim Jozwiak, 1970-76
Tony Nasr, 1975-77
Barbara Winslow, 1976-79
Paul Henerlau, 1973-
David Heron
Robert DeBrecht
Barbara Fuchs
George Pettitt

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